

**Written evidence submitted by Amnesty International UK and Migrant Voice
(COR0130)**

Amnesty International UK is a national section of a global movement of over seven million people who campaign for every person to enjoy all rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards. We represent more than 670,000 supporters in the United Kingdom. We are independent of any government, political ideology, economic interest or religion.

Migrant Voice is a national, migrant-led organisation working with migrants regardless of their status and country of origin, including refugees and asylum seekers. We develop their skills and confidence, empowering them to speak for themselves about their own lives and issues that affect their communities. Whether speaking out in the media or on public or political platforms, the aim is to create positive change for migrants – countering xenophobia, discrimination and unjust policies, strengthening communities, and bringing social justice – change which benefits the whole of UK society.

1. We have prepared this short supplementary submission in light of publication of the Government’s Covid-19 recovery strategy: *Our Plan to Rebuild*, May 2020, CP 239.¹
2. The strategy confirms the Government’s expectation that coronavirus and the need to monitor, contain and repress it will continue to be a current concern for the foreseeable future and possibly beyond.² The Government’s assessment is that it is unlikely that the virus will be eradicated in the UK (or globally).³ It indicates that a phase in which there is ‘reliable treatment’ may be a long time coming (what it refers to as ‘phase 3’).⁴ In the meantime, it will be critical that measures to monitor (including testing and tracing) and contain the virus are widely understood and adhered to. Whereas the Government has changed some of its public messaging and commenced limited relaxation of its position and advice concerning returning to work for some people, it continues to advise people to stay home where possible, practice social distancing, avoid public transport where possible and self-isolate where there is any indication of infection.⁵ Capacity to monitor effectively and respond quickly to infectious outbreaks are key aspects of the strategy.⁶

¹ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy>

² *Ibid*, e.g. item 6 of the ‘challenges ahead’ (at page 13) and the section on ‘Accurate disease monitoring and reactive measures’ (at page 37)

³ *Ibid*, page 23

⁴ *Ibid*, page 23

⁵ On the same day as publishing its strategy, the Government published guidance, *Staying alert and safe (social distancing)*, which includes: “*It is still very important that people stay home unless necessary to go out for specific reasons set out in law.*” Also on that day, the Government published guidance, *Staying safe outside your home*, which includes: “*To reduce demand on the public transport network, you should walk or cycle wherever possible.*”

⁶ See *Our Plan to Rebuild*, *op cit*, e.g. the section on ‘reactive measures’ (at page 23) and on ‘Accurate disease monitoring and reactive measures’ (at page 37)

3. The strategy gives very little attention to immigration policy or practice. Indeed, the only such consideration in the document concerns operations at the border – providing information on social distancing, requiring contact information from arrivals for the purpose of tracing and requirements for people arriving in the UK to self-isolate for fourteen days.⁷ Otherwise, the strategy is silent as to the impact of the pandemic and response to it upon people in the UK subject to immigration control; or the impact of immigration policy and practice upon people’s capacity to adhere to requirements and advice designed to ensure the pandemic response is effective.
4. The day following the publication of the Government’s strategy, the Independent Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies published an analysis of the Government’s response to the pandemic: *COVID-19: what are the options for the UK? Recommendations for government based on an open and transparent examination of the scientific evidence*.⁸ Capacity to monitor (test and trace) and respond quickly to infectious outbreak is a clear priority in that analysis.⁹ There is also some express recognition of immigration policy and operations as a particular point of important focus for an effective response. The analysis highlights, in this regard, immigration detention¹⁰ and no recourse to public funds conditions imposed on limited leave.¹¹ It further highlights, for example, the relevance of racial and socio-economic inequalities¹² and the importance of community engagement and trust.¹³ It draws attention to concerns regarding overcrowded housing¹⁴ and unsafe working environments.¹⁵ Whereas several of these concerns are not elaborated upon in relation to immigration policy or migrants specifically, their relevance is clear.
5. We are aware that the Committee has received much evidence over a short period of time. Accordingly, we have opted not to update our March submission with more detailed analysis of either the evidence the Committee has received, the actions of the Home Office since March or further example of the impact felt by people subject to immigration control. However, we draw the Committee’s attention again to our March submission in light of the two publications to which we here refer, from which we draw the following conclusions:
 - a Our original submission and the concerns there expressed remain relevant and urgent.
 - b Those concerns are likely to remain relevant and urgent for the foreseeable future and potentially far beyond.
 - c Those concerns are exacerbated, particularly by the increased emphasis on capacity to monitor and respond to infectious outbreak. This is so because, as

⁷ *Ibid*, section on ‘International travel’ (at page 29)

⁸ See: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MD4-8z-yy-lO5ZsfmXAxTUo79iFk1zfy/view>

⁹ *Ibid*, e.g. recommendation 2 on page 5

¹⁰ *Ibid*, e.g. recommendation 6 on page 6

¹¹ *Ibid*, section on ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’ on page 26

¹² *Ibid*, e.g. recommendation 13 on page 6; and see page 24

¹³ *Ibid*, e.g. recommendation 10 on page 6

¹⁴ *Ibid*, e.g. recommendation 6 on page 6

¹⁵ *Ibid*, e.g. recommendation 7 on page 6

we referred to in our previous submission, immigration policy and practice, in several ways, prevents and deters many people from engaging with various public authorities with the prospect that it is not possible to monitor or respond quickly to outbreaks affecting people subject to immigration control and the communities in which they live and work.

- d The Government remains unwilling or unable to fully and effectively appraise the impact of immigration policy and practice in relation to the pandemic and the pandemic response.
- e The imminent parliamentary scrutiny of the Immigration and Social Security Coordination Bill provides a vital opportunity to compel the Government to undertake that appraisal alongside making fundamental reform to the immigration system. While we anticipate questions of scope being raised in relation to that Bill, we note that there are not only many reasons including the pandemic why it would be wrong to treat the Bill as of narrow scope. The Bill is, in any event, of wide scope since it includes provision for regulations to be made affecting people who have neither exercised nor ever had any right to exercise any of the retained rights which the Bill will end.¹⁶

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¹⁶ This Bill is in all but precisely the same form as the Bill of the same name presented in the previous (2017-19) parliamentary session, but which fell after Committee stage. Amnesty's written evidence to the Public Bill Committee addresses the question of scope at paragraphs 5-19. That evidence is available here: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmpublic/Immigration/memo/ISSB25.pdf>